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Finding the essence: Researching cultural and creative cooperations

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Abstract

This paper investigates how the practice of creating relationships between cultural / creative and other organisations can be studied from a constructionist perspective and with phenomenological methodology. The present contribution briefly discusses several recent publications and reflects on the methodological implications of these cases. It sets out to trace the working of construction and translation of concepts and practices, and elaborates on how differences can be made productive in a vital aspect of cultural and creative organisational practice, establishing sustainable relationships with contexts.
The result of the paper is an agenda for further discussion on methodological approaches of cultural/ creative entrepreneurial practice and its relationship with contexts.

Keywords: Cooperations, research methodology, cultural turn.

Introduction

Arguably, the realisation of sustainable and productive connections with partners is one of the core objects of concern for cultural and creative entrepreneurs[1]. At the same time, we know from experience and research that this relationship is not always without problems. Creative commercial service providers and their clients, or cultural organisations dealing with political forces: it is safe to say that they start off in cooperations by talking different languages. As researchers we come across diverse manifestations of the relationship between cultural / creative organisations and organisations in other sectors. I have researched them over the past years from different angles. This contribution brackets 'practices of connecting'. The manifestations and outcomes of 'practices of connecting' vary in different disciplinary fields and in different regional contexts. The concern for this contribution however is not to discuss diverse manifestations, but to discuss how these practices are constructed, and to look at methodologies that are conducive fur investigate this phenomenon. The central question is what theoretical and methodological approach can be instrumental in conceptualising the relation-building practice of cultural and creative entrepreneurs.
This contribution starts off with two preliminary observations with regard to the main question. Then, I will discuss a number of practical cases and interpret them from the point of view of theoretical and methodological implications. I will elaborate on perspectives that can be conducive in understanding connection-making, which can be the basis of further empirical research in this field.

1. Observations

An economistic position from which to conduct research on cultural and creative organisational practice, for instance cultural entrepreneurship or arts marketing, is likely to reveal a problematic 'fit' between cultural practice and economic explanatory devices. This point is particularly topical in the study of entrepreneurship in the cultural context. Klamer (2011) made this point clear by pointing at the economists' dilemmas in studying cultural entrepreneurship. Following strict economic paradigms will soon get you into trouble trying

[1] In this contribution, we make a distinction between cultural entrepreneurs, referring dominantly to arts organisations in a non-profit context, and creative entrepreneurs, referring to dominantly for-profit creative firms.

to to explain complex entrepreneurial practice, since cultural entrepreneurs “come with characteristics that are hard to specify, like creative, risk-taking, and alert.” (Klamer, 2011).

Several writers have voiced critique on how a one-sided economic take on entrepreneurship in general, not necessarily cultural entrepreneurship, ignores alternative dimensions and values of entrepreneurial behaviour (Thornton et al., 2011). Socio-cultural approaches of organisational practice are by now well established, for instance in the field of Strategy-as-practice (Golsorkhi, 2010). Qualitative perspectives, such as the narrative take, are widely used to explain entrepreneurial behaviour. Narratives or other perspectives however have limited use for the logico-positivist thinkers that tend to be in the majority in policy contexts. Still, an economic explanatory framework is required if scientific input is to make any impression in the context of political decision-making processes. Here, especially in neo-liberal times, the economic ‘bottom line’ determines policy, and therefore defines the political reality of cultural entrepreneurs. The socio-cultural approach is however becoming more visible in cultural entrepreneurship education too. The educational community increasingly focusses on the transfer not only of administrative and economic skills, but also of skills related to soft and culturally determined aspects of functioning as a cultural entrepreneur in society: the creation of ‘cultural capital’ (Kuhlke et al., 2015).

The second observation also concerns the relationship between economic and cultural thinking in our field of interest. Continuing on the first observation, we need to recognise that cultural and creative entrepreneurs pragmatically and strategically incorporate economic and neo-liberal discourse as a rhetoric, thus discursively contributing to the construction of a rational economic understanding of their context, while at the same time their daily practice, and daily dealings with local administrations are defined (and constructed) in cultural and artistic terms. So the second observation is that we need to be aware of a possible gap between (national) discourses and (local) practice, between talking and doing.

The two preliminary observations concern the tension between an economic and cultural approaches of cultural entrepeneurial practice, and the discourse / practice gap in operationalising economic thought in cultural organisational practice. The observations lead to the hypothesis that in developing a methodological point of view we will at least need to be sensitive to situated interpretations of ideological discourses, and, paradoxically, to mechanisms in organisational practice that contribute to the establishment of these gaps. Our position (and experience) is that the constructionist approach is the more productive one in our field of interest.

In the following I will first present a number of cases that illustrate aspects of connection-making. They pertain to concrete organisation – to – organisation connections, but also to more political practices such as cooperative governance. I have discussed these cases elswhere, and introduce them in order to reflect on the methods used.

2. Discourse and practice

The first case is a discussion of a study on the strategic practice of cultural and creative organisations. In Kolsteeg (2016a), I put into focus how organisational actors in cultural organisations develop idiosyncratical understandings of economic and managerial language. In Kolsteeg (2016a) I do not present new empirical material, but return to insights produced in an earlier longitudinal, non-participatory observation (Kolsteeg, 2014) on strategic practice in cultural and creative organisations.

Terms such as strategy, growth, leadership can be radically re-interpreted in cultural and creative organisations, and these interpretations significantly define managerial practice in these organisations. In many cases the operationalisation of these terms was much more connected to the daily artistic and creative practice than to economic / managerial imperatives found in policy discourse. Organisations demonstrated the capacity to connect to a political economic (neo-liberal) discourse, while at the same time maintaining an autonomous artistic/creative identity. Likewise, views on the professionalism of a cultural manager or

entrepreneur were observed not only to be discursively constructed, but also did these constructions determine managerialist practice.

An illustration of how these processes may work is provided by taking a closer look at the political discourse on cultural entrepreneurship in the Netherlands discloses that the Dutch national government's definition of entrepreneurship in the cultural context is predominantly that it comes down to developing a (necessarily 'creative') solution to the budget deficit that is caused by reduction of government support in the first place. The entrepreneurial *practice* in the Dutch cultural field in relation to local administrative levels however, after a slow and hesitant start, shows signs of a more substantive interpretation and operationalisation of the term, related to not only financial, but also (local) societal and artistic impact. In strategic plans, cultural organisations tend to relate to the government definition of entrepreneurship as well as to a broader understanding of the term. Here we observe that organisations create and support a dual connection. First, a connection to the economic and political context, and a connection to the world of artistic and creative development.

In discussing this phenomenon I use the theoretical position of the performativity of language, invoking the 'CCO' (Communication Constitutes Organisation) argument (Ashcraft et al., 2009) and by being aware of sense making processes in organisational practice (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). This perspective allowed to realise that in order to understand organisational practice it is key to understand processes of meaning making. Perceiving the relationship of a cultural organisation with the outside world as a practice of continuous discursive interaction allows to understand how references to and use of political and economic terms and concepts contribute to the construction of that relationship. At the same time these terms can (even unreflectively) be given alternative meanings. Cultural managers, through the act of translation and reinterpretation, realise and shape a connection with the context.

Also a connection can be suggested between discursive operations and the construction of managerial identity in cultural/creative organisations. In order to shed more light on how professionals construct a professional identity through the estblishment of connections, I refer to the perspective developed by Noordegraaf (Noordegraaf, 2011) and Thomas (Thomas and Hewitt, 2011) on how professionals in times of ambiguity tend to 'renegotiate, realize and affirm' their professional identity. Reacting to the dynamics of the context, managers in cultural organisations define their roles as leader in a way that deviates from the traditional praxis of dual substantive/business management structures. In creative for-profit teams, leadership can be a more distributed activity. The identity of organisational actors is – partly – determined by how they make sense of their experiences in connecting with third parties.

Trust

Cooperations are not always successful. In Dutch political understanding of securing economic growth, the realisation of sustainable connections between creative for-profits and non-creative parties is seen to be conducive to a sustainable technical innovation and macro-economic progress. In Kolsteeg (2016b) I set out to understand what it is that frustrates the success of this type of cooperations, despite often extensive and long term government support. I focus on the cooperation between creative for profits and other businesses. Cooperations involving cultural organisations are not part of this analysis.

For the analysis in this publication I use the concept of social networking, and the importance of social capital to create connections and exchange information, as well as the role of trust in this process (Blumberg et al., 2012). It builds on the contention of Hardy et al. that trust can be understood as a 'process of sense making that rests on shared meaning and the involvement of all participants in a communication process' (Hardy et al., 1998). Interpersonal trust can be transferred to organisational level in order to support participatory decision making (Das and Teng, 2001). Here we see unsuccessful cooperations because differences in the interpretation of terms are not discussed. The relationship does not conduce trust.

Literature shows that creating trust is a complex process because the parties involved are often not equal. Particularly telling for how cooperations can be established is the concept of 'façades of trust': one of the partners in a cooperation is dominant and enforces the terms and conditions of the cooperation. The other party capitulates to this order and thus sustains a situation of unbalance.

This unbalance explains to a degree explains the suboptimal level of success of creative / other cooperations in the Netherlands. Explicit or implicit entry conditions for cooperative projects cause that creative micro SMEs experience cooperation like an un approachable fortress, and unified creative organisations publicly plead for more understanding of "the specific characteristics of the creative industry (diversity, SMEs, intellectual property) and provide space for experiment and customization, focussing on crossovers between creative industry and other sectors […]" (DCI, 2016). In today's dominantly neo-liberal context short term economic effects of innovation are all that is expected, which is not only in contrast with the specific ways of working of creative firms, it is also – consequently – in contrast with the essence of creativity. Instead of realising a start situation for cooperations between creative for profits and firms in other sectors that conduces trust, the harsh reality is that creative firms as the underlying party capitulate, and innovation and cooperation lose.

Creative hatcheries or hubs, the spatial manifestations of the connection between creatives and others, also tend to adopt economic reasoning to explain their raison d'être, downplaying the specifics of creative innovation processes. A salient example of such capitulation is observed in the Dutch gaming industry. This sector was elected (and let itself be elected) as a prime example of creative innovation and economic progress. That the pressure on the sector was experienced to be immense was illustrated in 2016 by the discovery that the sector had for some time deliberately manipulated growth figures to appear more successful than it actually was.

Political support

A final illustration is taken from the European field, in particular from one of the calls in the Horizon2020 research agenda. This call refers to the establishment of participatory governance in cultural organisations, as a future orientated attempt in order to improve the relationship with user groups that are traditionally harder to use.

The advocacy organisation *Voices of Culture* defines participatory governance by acknowledging the double meaning of governance, referring to both government and organisational management, to suggests that this compound term refers to sharing government and management 'with the citizens to whom the heritage belongs'. More specific vocabulary on participatory governance is to be developed, one that relates more closely to instititutional and regionally situated interpretations and practices. The report puts forward that one can only speak of participatory governance when it is based on shared power. The document defines participatory governance as the intersection of leadership and the civic position of a cultural institution, resulting from the intersection of internal and external cultural leadership. It constitutes a relationship between cultural leaders, citizens and (local) political actors, in line with the European ideal to foster democratic participation, sustainability and social cohesion'.

In their brainstorming report 'Participatory governance in cultural heritage' (Voices, 2015), *Voices of Culture* enumerates a number of challenges on the road towards participatory governance. Among these challenges are lack of political will to cooperate or lack of conducive political structures; lack of professional will, conflicts of legitimacy, and lack of funding, public private partnerships. Creative innovation in the field of creating connections requires both leadership from political and professional actors, and new constellations of cultural / non cultural entities (or: cultural and 'new services'). *Voices of Culture* points out that realisation of participatory governance requires political will and structures, and professional preparedness.

A successful connection between cultural organisations and social groups requires a structure that supports the 'situating operationalisation' of political ambitions. With this I mean that political discourses are translated

into practice with the risk of discourse and practice diverting. In translation, discourses are adapted to local praxis. This leads to the position that participatory governance is understood as the strategy for cultural leaders to improve the relationship between institutions, audience groups and political stakeholders, involving artists in exploring a new relevant role for cultural institutions in societal discourse. This tension between political and artistic discourses, and political and artistic practices, is the essence of successful cooperation between art and society, or between cultural organisations and specific groups in the population. The tension needs to be thematised, not to realise a head-on confrontation or rest in surreptitious avoidance, but in order to thematise this relationship for – agonistic – constructive discussion.

The discussed projects are diverse in scope and in objects of analysis, but they do reveal aspects of making connections between cultural or creative organisations and other entities. We have found discursive aspects, idiosyncratic interpretation of terms and translation in organisational practice. We have seen construction of identity, and we have seen the importance of alignment of macro and micro levels of political and leadership activities.

For now, we can conclude in that the practice of making connections we can observe:

- How practitioners make sense of macro discourses and connect them to micro.
- How practitioners realise a functional space (context) for action.
- How practitioners construct professional identity and trust.

In studying connections, the objects of analysis are meaning making practices, context relation practices and professional identity. In thinking about methodologies and practical research methods we will keep these issues in mind.

3. Thinking about Method

In this paragraph, we will elaborate on the theoretical concepts of meaning making, context (including macro and micro relations) and identity, which we extracted in the previous discussion. We will theorise on three central concepts that were abducted from the discussed practices of connection making. These concepts are meaning making, context and identity. We will also discuss research methods that can be related to these three concepts.

The fundamental criteria for looking at methods are

1. They need to be concerned with interpretation of language and practice. Meanings cannot be ‘appercieved or accessed directly, but only through intepreting their artifactual representations’ (Yanow, 2006).
2. They need to be aware of how practices are embedded in context and routine activities (Grand et al., 2010).

Three techniques are central in interpretive research, interviewing, document analysis and (participative) observation. It makes sense to look at discursive practices, rules, rituals, in short all activities that contribute to the construction of meaning making practices. Core concepts are not taken for granted, but observed in the process of their making of (Bachmann-Medick, 2015). Looking at social phenomena through a constructivist and contextualising lense means to ‘reconnect the interpretation and analysis of the social process of the constitution of meaning’ (46). This means micro-investigation and connecting discourses to Discourses. The formulation of the characteristics of such an approach closest to our field of interest, is the work done on epistemology and methodology in Strategy as Practice research. Three specific approaches resonate with our discussion. These are the perspectives of Critical Discourse Analysis, Ethnomethodology, and the Identity perspective. For each perspective, we will discuss its epistemological fundaments, aspects of its methodical practice, and issues of generalisability.

Meaning making: Critical Discourse Analysis

The strength of critical discourse analysis (Vaara, 2010) is its critical awareness of the relation between

discursive practices and underlying Discourses and ideologies, strategies of legitimations and rationalisation. CDA methods are primarily based on close reading of texts in combination with other social practices, and a continuous going back and forth between reading, interpreting and theorising. A possible weak point for such a simultaneous text / practice analysis is the often unequally available source material. After all, official discourses can be readily available from official and public (online) platforms, while live person-to-person interaction can be much harder to get access to, and requires the researcher to make decisions about being in or outside the observed practice. A critical position is aware of how the lack of acuity in neo liberal discourses is what creates space for meaning making, while at the same time politically correct interpretations can dominantly influence the interpretive practice.

Practices of meaning making are situated in the 'lifeworld' (Yanow, 2006: 12) of an individual, and they are influenced by (understandings of) prior experiences of the individual. Meaning making is a social process, in so far as the meaning that is constructed is shared, "developed in the course of living in common, interacting through the medium of political, cultural and other artifacts…" (14). Human acts are considered as both expressions of and contributions to meaning making (15). This hermeneutical perspective requires going back and forth between 'text' and 'context'.

As a methodological starting points for research that looks at gaps between discourse and practice (criterium 1 above), Bellier (2005) suggests a combination of the linguistic take that conceptualises discourses and the anthropological take that looks at real people. This elaborates the discourse in CDA to the operationalisation of discourses in practice. Participant observation reveals differences between organisations in for instance processes of institutionalisation of elements of organisational culture. These processes can be extremely complex and may involve a wider variety of contextual levels (criterium 2). Bellier points at how (political) globalisation affects the definition of the relationship with others, where economic and power inequalities remain. Organisations are part of a system but at the same time they are mutually dependent within and outside borders of nation states: "[…] borders have not disappeared, and the process of classification, which leads to categories of thoughts, that serve to fix policy orientations, arrange groups, define interest relations, and elaborate conditions for association of exclusion, is extremely sophisticated" (id.). This requires a critical position aware of the lack of precision in discourses (in our case for instance in the understanding of terms like growth, cultural entrepreneurship).

We have seen in the case of the Dutch gaming industry how its manifestation as a sector was informed by underlying political and ideological discourses on political expectations of the importance of the creative sector in revitalizing Dutch economy. The critical perspective of CDA would in the case of the game sector add to the interpretation of the situation as a matter of (economic) power and (creative) submission.

Weak points in CDA are sampling and generalisation. Vaara's (2010) suggests that in CDA generalisation is a matter of elaborating on key findings and placing them in a wider context. This seems logical but it also evokes questions about the conceptualisation of context and the relationship between the object of discussion and its context. This issue will be discussed on the basis of the more dynamic conceptualisation of the relation between practice and context developed by Van Dijk (2008). What CDA certainly can do is reveal discursive strategies such as legitimation or moralisation in an observed practice.

Methodical points of attention

- Meaning making is situated.
- Language and practice
- Preciseness of definitions
- Awareness of effects of globalisation on power inequalities in discourses
- Access to material
- Generalisation

On (the construction of) context

The second core concept we will look at more closely is context. Moving from discourse to practice can be understood as dealing with the relationship between text and context. Van Dijk (2010: 230) introduces *context models* as an intermediary level of observation and analysis. Van Dijk describes how a language user "adapts to the communicative environment through subjective interpretation of that environment", or to the interpretation of underlying structures, facts and ideologies and discourses. Text and situation become mingled in the language user' mind. The concept of the context model allows us to think of context as a cognitive and subjective model, created by participants in a discourse, which helps them to "analyse, understand, and represent social situations, both individually and in accordance with the norms of a group or community". The context model combines subjective and intersubjective understandings or shared believes. Van Dijk particularly draws attention to how participants represent the "knowledge of the others, a fundamental condition for all interaction". The context model discloses how a participant constructs context on the basis of individual and shared knowledge and believes, and how discourse relates to subsequent action.

The *ethnomethodological* approach (Samra-Fredericks, 2010) is primarily concerned with understanding how people make sense through every day practice. It adds to critical discourse analysis through its attention of the micro level of interaction. For this it is necessary to observe people's everyday talk and reasoning during everyday communicative interactions. The focus is on the practitioners' use of language and the central methodological point is the analysis of conversations. In detailed scrutiny of conversations the researcher can observe how interlocutors, through their verbal interactions with interruptions, negotiations, the use of authoritiy or seniority, alternating signals of dominance and submission, in short underlying power-dynamics among the interlocutors. Important for our discussion is that in conversation analysis context is not "taken for granted" (Samra-Fredericks, 2010: 232), but is considered to be part of what is created in conversation. This constructionist position opens up the possibility to look at the relationship between (conversational) practice and underlying structures (critterium 2) as one that is continually changing.

The awareness of conversational power-games relates this method to critical thought discussed earlier. It can bring to light how in an interaction roles are divided, for instance that "certain members are *expected* to ask the questions while others *should* provide answers …" (234, emphasis in the original). In terms of Van Dijk's (2010) context model: a member's language use in the conversation can disclose the categories in this member's context model. A context model cannot be observed as a real object, yet its existence can be inferred from the practice that we can observe: "we can study the consequences" (107). The way "things are being formulated" gives away underlying perspectives on the world. In our field of interest, we can for instance infer the characteristics of an internalised context model from the way practitioners justify their actions and describe their environment and "quality of the relationship". How do practitioners' evaluative expressions on relationships reflect on the concept of relationships, how do they contribute to the construction of their context?

For example, hearing an organisational leader talk about cultural leadership in terms of 'leading the way' and 'organising support for my ideas' reveals how this leader thinks about the relationship between the organisation and its environment, what position other organisational members have in a strategic process, and what the importance is of keeping external stakeholders informed. In the Netherlands, more scientific and political attention is developed to thinking about the contours of cultural leadership in the future. Analysing a leader's conversation will bring to light how terms that originate from such underlying (cultural-political) Discourses are given importance and meaning on a local and situated level, or how these meanings are negotiated by interlocutors looking for a common understanding of these terms, to justify their further practice.

In practical terms, the choice for performing conversation analysis requires the researcher to be present at the right moment in the right space. It requires a sensitivity of the researcher to how the practitioner understands the world and expresses understanding of the world, therefore the method requires a long term closeness between researcher and practitioner. This of course includes the obligation of the researcher to reflect on how her presence influences the situation under scrutiny, and to be very much aware of to what extend research findings are influenced by the interaction with practitioners (or practice by the contact with the researcher). The method of thick (as in non-reductionist) description allows the researcher to connect to the "complexity and multi-layered quality of cultural utterances" (Bachmann-Medick, 2015: 46). It allows to separate the significant from the insignificant and allows to develop theory from the actual practice. Bachmann-Medick points at the problematic aspect of working with thick descriptions, which is the question 'how dense must a cultural description be in order for it to be conclusive'? A solution to this would be using the grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) that allows a researcher to move systematically from a thick description towards a categorization of characteristics of the observed social phenomena.

Methodical points of attention
- Context is a cognitive and subjective construct
- Longitudinal observation
- Thick description
- Closeness to the practitioner
- Access to observable practice
- Reflection on position of the researcher

On identity

In his discussion of our third concept, that of identity, in Critical Management Studies, Thomas (2009) uses Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) suggestion that identities are part of discourse. Turning to Critical Management Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis makes sense for our present endeavour because of their perceptiveness of power situations in discourses and practices, and their interest in emancipatory processes. The discussed cases on trust and on participatory governance illustrate that such perceptiveness is functional to explaining the practice of connecting by cultural and creative organisations. The discussion on identity evolves among other aspects around the ontological questions whether identity is fixed or a consequence of the act of identification. With Laclau and Mouffe, Thomas (2009) proposes that identities are contingent and fluid, albeit that a meaninful identity can be partially fixed by drawing from discourses (or contexts, criterium 2 above). When confronted with disturbances of the social framework, a subject will experience an identity crisis and will perform an act of identification. This identification involves agency in the sense that a decision needs to be made, but it also involves the structural level, represented by hegemonic discourses. A (sudden) lack of structure leads agents to make identity-constructing decisions.

In the case discussed above on the role of trust in establishing cooperations by creative for-profit firms, I mentioned how 'the' creative sector experienced a breach of the structure when it realised that connections were not materialising the way they were expected to. In a (exceptional) manifestation of unity, the sector showed agency and publicly implored to henceforth be approached with more respect and understanding of the creative identity. This action logically involved a description and therefor a fixation of this identity. The connection made between language and practice (criterium 1) is one of stabilisation and definition. In this discursive act, the sector renounces from the hegemonic economic perception of interfirm cooperations. If we were to investigate this example in more depth and research in conversations how creative professionals justify their actions of resistence, I presume we would encounter influences of discourses on creative and cultural autonomy, arguably the core characteristic of a cultural/creative identity.

For this third method it is relevant to look into how the close and lasting relation of the researcher with her subject that was mentioned in the previous paragraph is further developed. For the discussion of this point of view we draw on the work done by Johnson et al., who show that this closeness is particularly important to explore the 'interconnectedness of strategists' identities and their praxis' (Johnson et al., 2010). Johnson et al. (discussing research in the field of Strategy as Practice) connect to the constructionist point of view that in everyday practice, strategists are "enacting an identity of strategists" (248). They do this in a local environment, using their (tacit) knowledge of local praxis. The point is comparable to Van Dijks (2010) suggestion of working with a context model, elaborated with a recursive effect of this model on the practitioner's identity. Cooperations between cultural/creative organisations and other organisations materialise in local settings, which bring along a set of *praxis* rules. Understanding the working of these cooperations requires understanding how an informal, in between level of theorisation that actors live and work with, drives their practice, and how the practitioners' interpretations relate back to their self-understanding. Identity is therefore a dynamic phenomenon, it is continually *being* constructed. In Kolsteeg (2016b) I refer to the work of Noordegraaf (Noordegraaf, 2011) to illustrate how in the cultural sector practitioners can be observed to construct a leadership identity on the basis of a personally contrived and situational combination of creative and business responsibilities.
So 'identity work' in our field requires a long term 'close-with' observation on how practitioners relate practice to praxis. Methodologically, this results in establishing longitudinal associations, realising different kinds of relationships and observing several types of performances by the actors. Once a basic level of trust has been established, the close relationship also starts to become meaningful for the subject, who can share thoughts and doubts with the researcher, perhaps seeking the advice of an academic professional. Therefore, this method requires a substantive level of reflectivity of both researcher and practitioner to remain aware of how friendship, consultancy and scientific research relate.

Methodical points of attention
Identity is contingent and fluid but can be fixed in crisis
Creative identity (identity?) is (re-)affirmed in times of crisis
Relation to praxis
Longitudinal
Reflection

Reflections
After having coined the metaphor of translation earlier in this contribution, it would have made sense to turn to the Actor Network theory for further elaboration of our central practice as a network constructing activity. The connection with the concept of 'translation' developed in the Actor Network (Latour, 2005) theory seems logical. Before we can take ANt as a theoretical and methodical perspective we will need to take a closer look at the ramifications of this view. The essential realisation of researching practice using ANt is the contention that the social isn't there as a separate entity to which actors relate; instead it is the consequence of the actors relating. The "plasma" as Latour (2005) calls it, the invisible material that goes round, or the "plug-ins" that actors subscribe to in order to *create* the social, these invisible entities are the real objects of analysis. The concepts presented in this contributions are all excellent candidates for the role of "plasma". Meaning, context and identity are the building blocks of, in our case, the (social) practice of making connections between cultural / creative entities and others. Their movement through the social leave traces that become understandable in relation to ANt terms such as translations and macro-micro respectively. Researching with ANt as a tool for disclosing the secrets of this practice means choosing an actor and starting pulling the strings constructed between that actor and other actors. In doing so, the techniques

discussed in this contribution of discourse and document analysis, longitudinal observation, are prominent. The mindset which is additional is to let go of the distinction between actor and context alltogether and start following those actants that leave traces, keeping your heading (the central research question) in view at all times. An interesting suggestion taken by Grand et al. (2010) from Latours work is that of cultivating *alienating perspectives.* Coining deliberately 'vague' concepts in the process of theorization, in order to observe how these terms are given meaning in the observed practice. In terms of ANt: there is no social, what you see is people creating the social. The question is not which ontology you adhere to, but which ontology your subject operationalises. Further research should shed light on how a consistently taken ANt perspective works out in our field of interest.

A second contemplation in this contrubution concerns how we can make knowledge on different reality constructing practices, and insights in gaps between discourses and practices, productive. How can insights in cultural cooperational practice benefit the central issue of creating relationships with others? A first step in this direction would be to not only discuss cultural/creative organisational practice in interpretive terms, but apply the same perspective to the 'other' organisational practice. Creating an equal level for comparison will reveal the differences between these practices as different strategies for sense making. This will eventually allow for learning from eachother and making differences productive. This also holds for comparative research on how cultural practitioners in different regional settings relate to cultural-political discourses. In the attempt to understand each other's practices it is important to realise that doing research is a practice that intervenes with the scrutinised practice. A constructivist approach requires the researcher to accept the research process as a discovery, and the necessary methods as techniques that require a flexible and creative attitude (Grand et. al 2010). The interaction of research and reflection with the observed practice is a continuous point of attention.

A third reflection elaborates on the importance of a dynamic concept of the practitioners' identity. In understanding cooperation on the level of (organisational) identity differences, the question is not what the other's identity *is*, if only because a static understanding of identity would require a conceptualisation of the environment as a static and objectively knowable entity that doesn't concur with a constructionist ontology. We can hardly learn from what the other's identity is, because the cultural elements that need to be made made sense of in order to make identity what it is, can hardly be re-contextualised. Instead, we can learn from how the other sets about *constructing* identity. What are the tactics to deal with macro-micro relations, praxis, ideologies, dominance, ruptures in structures? And, important for educators in this field, what competences do cultural entrepreneurs require to deal with these contingencies? Going further on this point is the realisation that the cultural/creative mode of constructing reality through language and practice may well have meaning outside our sectors as well. The interest shown by non-creative sectors for what I would shortly call the creative modus operandum involves how creative thought relates to post Fordist labour regimes in terms of innovation and economic growth. Looking at it from the perspective of relations and cooperations, cultural/creatives sense making practices could well inspire actors in non-creative sectors. Thus cultural/creative entrepreneurship could 'learn as well as contribute to the business community's smart practices' (Wyszomirski and Goldberg-Miller, 2014).

For us as researchers, a modest constructionist awareness is in order. Exchanging perspectives among research traditions is needed in order to create a rich understanding of the practice under scrutiny. Also we should be aware of hegemonic tendencies in comparing practices in different regions. Buden (2016: 175) discusses this matter poignantly in his critique on how research of Eastern European cultural practice can be studied in how it differs from hegemonic Western European culture.

Conclusion

This contribution discusses methodological and methodical considerations for interpretive research in the field of cultural and creative entrepreneurship, particularly the practice of creating connections between these organisations and others. I contend that a logico-economic perspective creates a power imbalance to the detriment of creative/cultural practices. This justifies a perspective informed by critical theory. On the basis of research examples I have identified three attentive concepts, namely the creation of meaning, the creation of context and the creation of identity. I have introduced three criteria to evaluate research methods, namely the awareness to the interaction between language and practice, and the embeddedness of action in context and routine. As objects of analysis, these three concepts and two criteria were connected to three methods known in interpretive organisational research, namely critical discourse analysis, ethnomethodology and identity work. These three methods are essentially critical and concur in the basic position that practice is understood as an expression of how practitioners understand and co-construct reality. They differ in deliberations on closeness to the subject and unit of analysis.

Table 1 – Characteristics of methods

	CDA	**CA / EM**	**Identity work**
Focus	Critical awareness of underlying ideologies	Critical perspective on micro-interactions Construction of context	Enacting identity narrativity
Unit of analysis	Text	Conversation / practice	Practice and praxis
Core method	Close reading of texts	Observation of interactions	"Close-with" relation Observation of different setting
Matters to be aware of	Availability of resources, Reflection on researcher in or out of the situation	Meaning making is situated. Preciseness of definitions The construction of context and underlying dynamics in conversations.	Contingent and fluid Fixed in crisis The agency and will to reflect upon and challenge hegemony Creative identity is autonomy
Methodical points of attention	Access to material Generalisation	Longitudinal observation Closeness to the practitioner Access to observable practice Reflection on position of the researcher	Relation to praxis Longitudinal observations Reflection on the position of the researcher

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